

Therefore, according to Gyaltsab je's *Commentary on the Uttaratantra*, the Three Jewels have all the qualities necessary to protect us.

- IV. Just as wish-fulfilling gems **are ornaments of the world**, the Three Jewels are ornaments for those striving for liberation.

According to Gyaltsab je's *Commentary on the Uttaratantra*, the Three Jewels are not only able to take us to higher rebirths, liberation, and Buddhahood, but also to assist us in accomplishing worldly activities.

- V. Just as wish-fulfilling gems **are foremost** among gems, the Three Jewels are foremost among objects of refuge.

According to Gyaltsab je's *Commentary on the Uttaratantra*, this teaches that the Three Jewels are superior to objects of refuge such as worldly deities, and so forth.

- VI. Just as wish-fulfilling gems **do not change** through being praised or criticized, the Three Jewels do not change through being praised or criticized.

According to Gyaltsab je's *Commentary on the Uttaratantra*, this teaches that the Three Jewels benefit sentient beings indiscriminately.

Hence the Three Jewels are named 'rare and foremost.'

5. How one should take refuge

From the point of view of the common vehicle, we should feel fearful of the general suffering of Samsara and of the particular suffering of the lower realms. In order to be protected from such suffering we should then take refuge from the depth of our heart by fully entrusting ourselves to the Three Jewels.

From the point of view of the uncommon Mahayana vehicle, we should feel fearful of the afflictive and cognitive obscuration of all sentient beings – including our own. In order to be protected from such obscurations we should subsequently take refuge from the depth of our heart by fully entrusting ourselves to the Three Jewels.

Panchen Sonam Drakpa then explains that the Mahayana refuge is foremost to the Hinayana refuge due to possessing four qualities:

- i. It possesses the quality of being all-inclusive since it focuses on all sentient beings
- ii. It possesses the quality of considering Buddhahood as a future attainment
- iii. It possesses the quality of realizing the result of enlightenment
- iv. It possesses the quality of outshining the Hinayana refuge

These qualities are cited in Maitreya's *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutra (Mahayana-sutramkara)*:

Since the Mahayana [refuge] is foremost

Due to the natural categorization of the four qualities of

Being all-inclusive, considering, realizing, and outshining

That which is well taken refuge in is called 'the foremost object of refuge.'

Therefore, it is important to understand that our refuge must be induced by an understanding of the numerous qualities of our objects of refuge.

Udbhata Saddhasvamin says in his *Praise of the Exalted One (Visesa-stava)*:

Haven given up other teachers

I take refuge in you, O Bhagavan

If someone should ask why, it is because

You have no faults and [all] good qualities

Also:

The more I reflect on

Other non-Buddhist traditions

The greater becomes

My faith, O Protector

*Their minds are ruined by the faults of tenets
Devised by those who are not omniscient
Those whose minds are ruined
Cannot even see you, faultless Teacher.*

Panchen Sonam Drakpa concludes his presentation of the three objects of refuge by citing the outstanding benefits of taking refuge in the Three Jewels:

- (1) One becomes a Buddhist
- (2) It serves as the support/basis for all the vows (Pratimoksha vows, etc.)
- (3) Previously accumulated obstructive karma diminishes and becomes eventually extinct
- (4) One accumulates great merit
- (5) One will not experience any obstacles caused by human or non-human beings
- (6) One is able to accomplish everything one wishes to
- (7) One will not take rebirth in the lower realms and one will eventually attain Buddhahood

Chandrakirti says in his ***Seventy Verses on Taking Refuge (Trisarana-gamana-saptati)***:

*Taking refuge in the three pursuers of refuge
Is the root of the eight [sets of] vows.*

Also:

*Those who take refuge in the Buddha
Will not take birth in the lower realms.
Having abandoned the human body
They will obtain a celestial body.*

The eight sets of vows are the eight sets of Pratimoksha vows:

1. the one day vows (8 vows)
2. the lay man's vows (5 vows)
3. the lay woman's vows (5 vows)
4. the male novice vows (36 vows)
5. the female novice vows (36 vows)
6. the vows of a postulant / probationer nun's vow (a novice nun on two years' probation before being ordained as a fully ordained nun, observing the six root Dharmas and the six auxiliary Dharmas in addition to her novice vows)
7. the fully ordained monk's vows (253 vows)
8. the fully ordained nun's vows (364 vows)

The Buddha says in the brief ***Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Verses (Asta-sahasrika-prajnaparamita)***:

*If the merit of having taken refuge had form
The three thousand-fold universe would be too small to hold it
How would one be able to measure with one hand
The treasures of the water of the great ocean?*

This completes the presentation of the three objects of refuge according to the ***General Meaning*** by Panchen Sonam Drakpa.

